

## Legal Environment

Freedom of speech is protected in Section 77 of the constitution, and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, legal restrictions exist for libel, blasphemy, and racism. In May 2014, an appeals court imposed more than \$41,000 in criminal fines on four journalists with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation for a 2009 radio broadcast in which they criticized a Danish housing association. The charges sparked concern from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In 2013, the Copenhagen-based international satellite television station Roj TV filed for bankruptcy after the Eastern High Court upheld its hefty fine of 10 million kroner (\$1.8 million). Roj TV was found guilty of “promoting terrorism” by the Copenhagen City Court in 2012 because of its connection with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a separatist militant group in Turkey that is regarded as a terrorist organization by the European Union and other entities. In February 2014 the Danish Supreme Court upheld the 2013 ruling, which is expected to be challenged by the European Court of Human Rights.

A new access to information law was ratified by the parliament in 2013. The controversial law prevents access to documents that are shared between ministers and their advisers. The OSCE expressed concern over provisions that may limit transparency in government and legislative proceedings. The law went into effect on January 1, 2014, amid demonstrations involving thousands of protesters.

In May, journalists Kjeld Hansen and Nils Mulvad were sentenced to fines of 2,500 kroner each (\$460) for violating the criminal code by disseminating private, health-related information about individuals when they published a story on MRSA infections in Danish pig farms and named the infected farms. The journalists had requested further information on infected farms from the National Health Board, and in June 2014 the Danish Ombudsman said that the information should be released. However, a farmers’ interest group has prevented disclosure by initiating a court case against the state and demanding the names be kept secret. By year’s end, the journalists were still awaiting a trial date.

Print, online, and broadcast media are regulated by the Danish Press Council, whose eight members are jointly appointed by the president of the Supreme Court and journalists’ associations. Participation is mandatory for broadcast media and print outlets that publish at least twice a year. Online media that choose to register receive the legal protections afforded to traditional journalists. If an outlet is found to have committed an ethical violation, the council can order it to publish the ruling; failure to do so can result in a fine or up to four months in jail, though these sanctions are rarely imposed.

## Political Environment

The aftermath of the 2005 controversy over cartoons of the prophet Muhammad still affects the Danish media, both in terms of direct threats made against journalists and media houses and through a considerable chilling effect on coverage of related issues. The cartoonist at the center of the controversy, Kurt Westergaard, continues to receive round-the-clock protection by the authorities after a failed assassination attempt in 2010. In 2012, two Muslim residents of Norway were found guilty of planning a bomb attack on the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, which originally published the controversial cartoons. A Danish citizen was arrested in Turkey in April 2014 for allegedly attempting to assassinate free speech advocate and former newspaper editor Lars Hedegaard in 2013; pending extradition to Denmark,

the suspect was allegedly released by Turkey in October in exchange for 47 hostages held by the Islamic State militant group. By year's end no official explanation had been given and there was no indication of the whereabouts of the alleged assailant.

## **Economic Environment**

The private print media are vibrant, though many papers have clear political sympathies. Two of the three largest daily newspapers, *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten*, are owned by the same company, though they have separate editorial boards and journalistic staff and different political leanings. The third, *Berlingske*, also runs the state-funded public service channel Radio24syv. Government subsidies and a value-added tax (VAT) exemption are vital for the press, and state support is available for struggling newspapers. The public broadcaster DR (Danmarks Radio), dominant in both radio and television, is financed by a license fee. TV2 is a privately run but government-owned television network, while the private station TV3 broadcasts from England due to advertising regulations. Satellite and cable television are also available, as are a variety of internet-based news outlets. In 2014, 96 percent of the population had access to the internet.